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The Women's Quarterly

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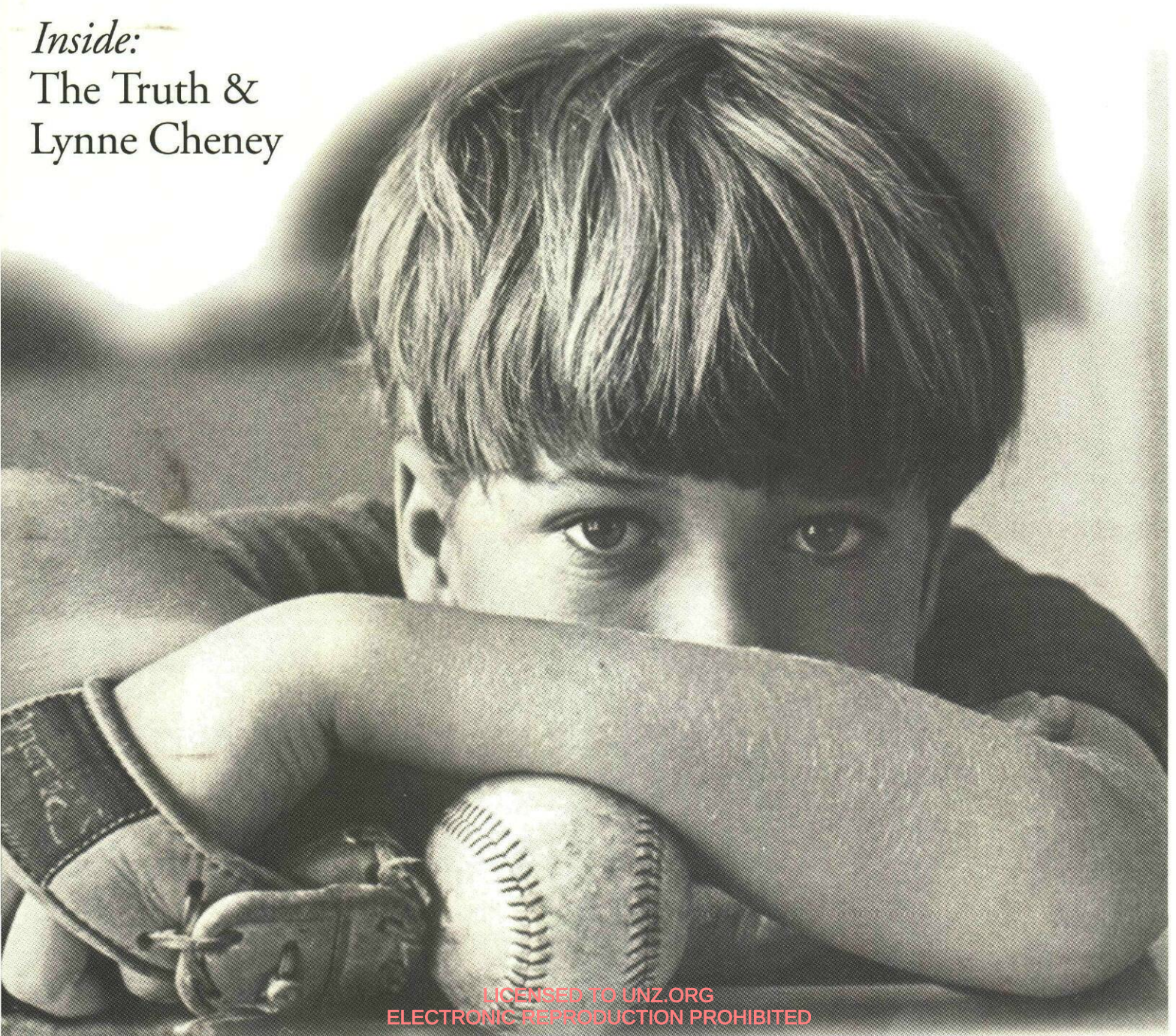
The Road Home

Foster care is a scandal. Is it time to bring back orphanages?

Inside:
The Truth &
Lynne Cheney



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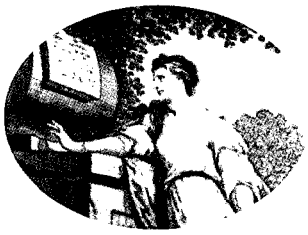
Diary



The Fame of Miss Burney

AFTER *The Madness of King George* hit the movie houses in 1994, I waited expectantly for the Fanny Burney revival to commence. Burney (1752-1840), a trail-blazing novelist, diarist, and member of Dr. Johnson's literary set, served as lady-in-waiting to Queen Charlotte (played in the movie by Helen Mirren). Though Burney wasn't a character in the film, the screenwriter had drawn heavily on her diaries.

The time seemed ripe for a Burney vogue of the kind her admirer Jane Austen was enjoying. Austen herself hailed Burney as England's first woman novelist, and lesser female writers have certainly had revivals—indeed, I'll never forget going to the Folger Theater in Washington to see a play by the seventeenth-century adventuress Aphra Behn. It was heralded as a work that hadn't been staged for four hundred years, and I could see why.

What does Aphra Behn have that Fanny Burney doesn't? Burney's *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* was an instant sensation when it came out in 1778 and is still a great read. The heroine, Evelina, denied recognition by her rich baronet father, was brought up quietly in the country by a devoted clergyman, Mr. Villars. Now she is entering into the "great world" of London society. Her grandmother, Madame Duval from Paris (an English barmaid before ensnaring Evelina's grandfather), shows up and is a marvel of bawdy vulgarity. I am partial to Madame Duval, but Dr. Johnson's favorite character in the novel was Mr. Smith, a Cockney suitor of Madame Duval's niece.

Johnson compared Burney's deft hand with characterization favorably to that of Henry Fielding, the author of *Tom Jones*. Burney gleefully noted Johnson's praise in her diary: "O, Mr. Smith! Mr. Smith is the Man!" she quoted him saying. "Laughing violently, [he said] Harry Fielding never drew such a good Character—such a fine varnish of low politeness!"

Aphra Behn is more popular today because contemporary literary sensibilities are more attuned to the outrageous behavior and philosophy of Behn, once an English spy in Antwerp. She also has the dubious distinction of having extolled the virtues of the noble savage before Rousseau. Miss Burney's work simply does not easily lend itself to the distortions of fashionable critics, though some have tried.

In the you-can't-make-this-stuff-up category, the ingenious Susan Fraiman proposes in her book, *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development*, that "the similarity between 'Villars' and 'villain' may signify." Fraiman also ponders the meaning of names ending in "ville," managing to link Lord Orville, the gallant and doting nobleman who marries Evelina, and Mr. Villars as oppressors of women.

Burney is not an icon for women's studies majors. But the Internet bristles with sites devoted to Aphra Behn, gender rebel. An Aphra Behn Society website, for example, proudly states its purpose as the promotion of research into "issues of gender and/or women's roles" in literature, while another glowingly describes Behn as a woman who "broke every rule."

Fanny Burney wasn't an angry woman out to overthrow the conventions of her society. Nor was Jane Austen. But Austen stayed at home in the vicarage, and modern theorists have found it easy to project their own ideologies onto her seemingly blank slate. Burney was truly a girl-about-town, moving in the "great world" of London, and thoroughly enjoying her literary fame.

BURNEY WAS perfectly situated to write about society: She had access to the highest levels, but, as the daughter of a musician, she wasn't quite of that world, which she captured brilliantly in nonfiction and in her novels. She wrote about life at court (where she was unhappy but loyal) and life beyond the royal confines, including a colorful account of the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, an East India Company official accused of corruption. Miss Burney tried in vain to persuade the prosecutor, Edmund Burke, a friend, of the fine qualities of Hastings, who was also her friend.

Fanny Burney, who became Madame D'Arblay in 1793, and endured a mastectomy without anesthesia in 1811, was quite a gal. Edmund Burke sat up all one night to finish reading *Evelina*, and so might you, gentle reader. Let the Burney revival begin.

~Charlotte Hays

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The Women's Quarterly

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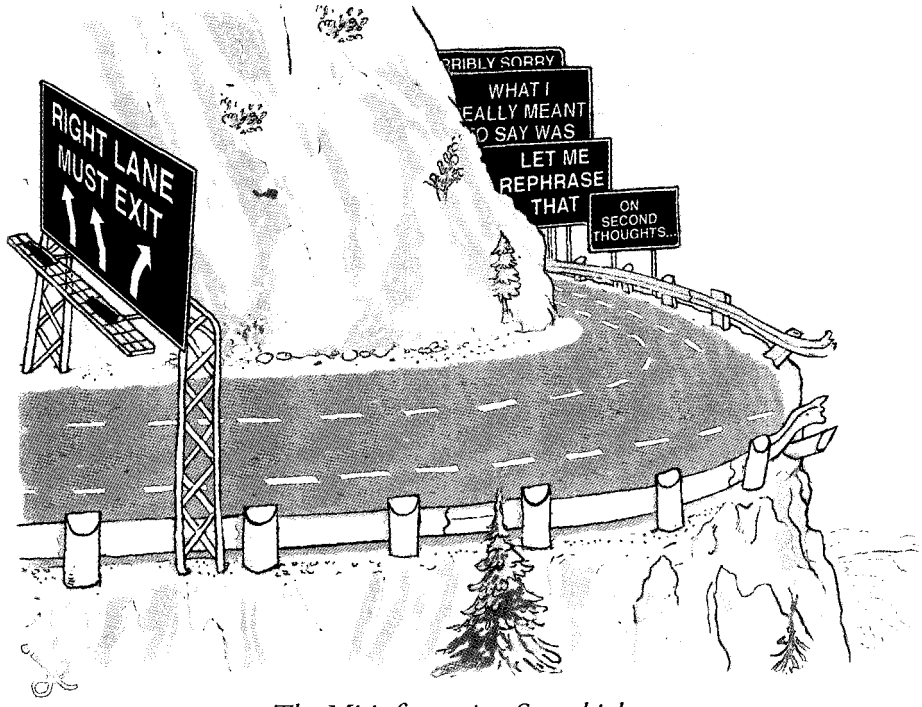

The Misinformation Superhighway

Cover photograph by Mike Pierce. Cartoon (above) by Charles Jaffé

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To Love, Honor, and Manipulate?

The Surrendered Wife has lots of knickers in a twist. Author Laura Doyle is a self-described "former shrew." ***Charlotte Allen*** isn't sure about that *former.*

I WANTED TO LIKE *The Surrendered Wife*, Laura Doyle's best-selling (and, in some quarters, highly controversial) self-help book. In the 285 pages tucked between pastel pink covers—the front one illustrated with the single long-stemmed red rose that is the mass-paperback symbol of chivalric male attention—Doyle promises that wives can obtain "romance, harmony, and the intimacy they crave" from their marriages if they quit nagging and let their husbands run the show.

First of all, I'm a surrendered wife myself, a surrendered wife *manqué*, you might say, mostly because I'm lazy. For example, Doyle advises: "Let your husband handle the finances." I've been doing that for years, as I can't add or subtract. The last time I even tried to balance my checkbook was in 1989. Let him take the wheel of the car, Doyle admonishes, and "don't correct him by telling him where to turn." Fine by me—I hate to drive, and I'd rather look at the scenery than keep track of a bunch of damn street signs. Doyle says you should say, "I need the help of a big strong man," when you want him to lift something large and heavy that you don't feel like lifting. Got a problem with that, Betty Friedan? I don't. "Make yourself available at least once a week" for marital sex, even if you don't feel like it. What? *Only* once a week?

Second, you've got to love anything that ticks off so many fellow females of the chattering classes. *The Surrendered Wife* calls to mind Marabel Morgan's 1973 suburban classic, *The Total Woman*, which bunched the drawers of an entire generation of libbers by advising wives to put the sizzle back into their marriage by cooking hubby a gourmet meal and serving it naked. Morgan was the anti-Kate Millett. The furor over Doyle's book also calls to mind the outrage when the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution in 1998 that wives should "submit graciously" to their husbands—a pronouncement that again caused feminists around the world to shiver with righteous indignation and former president Jimmy

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Carter to quit the denomination.

"Haven't we all evolved beyond high-school tricks?" was how one resolutely un-surrendered Manhattan wife vented when *New York Times* reporter Julie Iovine queried her about her reaction to Doyle's book. "Simple answers," sniffed a frosty Jean Baker Miller, director of training at the Wellesley Center for Women at Wellesley College. In the same article, Iovine described her own relentlessly egalitarian postmodern marriage: "It's so even steven we practically keep score cards. I know that if I go out on the town with my girlfriends, he's clocking the hours for when it's his turn. And if he goes grocery shopping and makes dinner, I'm in for a full week of dish washing. It's only fair."

Maybe so, Julie, but when my husband schleps for a steak and then grills it for me with an ice-cold martini on the side, I'd rather follow Doyle's advice in Chapter Seven of *The Surrendered Wife*: "Smile and say, 'Thank you.'" And then sit back and let him wash up the plates and glasses. As Doyle puts it, "You deserve to have sweet, beautiful, luxurious things in your life, and your man deserves the pleasure of giving them to you."

So what's wrong with a book whose basic message is: You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar? And: It never hurts to stroke a man's ego? Isn't it less aggravating than keeping "score cards" listing which spouse owes what by way of household chores? Isn't marriage more pleasant when you're not fighting? Isn't it nice when your guy opens the door for you and slides the Cabernet Sauvignon into your balloon glass? If you can't stand backseat drivers, why would you want to be one? Do you really want to tell your spouse what to wear, the way a lot of wives do, as though he were your five-year-old son? Doyle is onto something profound and true about what women really want from a husband—and it's not an "even steven" marriage.

The problem I had with Doyle's book is that I've been reading Shakespeare too long. Ever since I was a teenager, one of my favorites among his plays has been his now-politically incorrect *The Taming of the Shrew*. When I was growing up and fighting with my parents and sassing my teachers, I identified with the heroine, Katharina, the headstrong, tart-tongued "shrew" who doesn't want to be demure and flirty and find herself shackled to that nice dolt in the next palazzo. She even has a passive-aggressive goody-two-shoes of a younger sister, Bianca, whom she can't stand—just like the adolescent me. Katharina needs "taming," all right—she needs to find a man who is her true match, someone good enough for her, someone smart and funny and above all, tough enough to take charge.

As an adult, I spent years in the love-market pining for that elusive combination of testosterone and brains. One night I would be wrapped around the leather-clad back of a semi-literate brute on a Harley-Davidson. The next, I would be trying to feign interest in a pallid budding pathologist and the fey seventeenth-century print he had given me. Fortunately, just before I reached my statistically determined sell-by date, I met a blue-collar guy who'd gone to an Ivy League college.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katharina meets and marries Petruchio. The dynamics of their relationship have been best summed up by, of all people, the ur-feminist Germaine Greer. As a social theorist, Greer is out there orbiting planet Marx, but as a Shakespeare critic she's tops, the Harold Bloom of the Greenham Common set. Bucking reams of predictable academic gobbledygook about the play's "patriarchal master narrative," Greer pointed out in her very first book, *The Female Eunuch*, that Petruchio "is man enough to know what he wants and how to get it. He wants her spirit and energy because he wants a wife worth keeping. He tames her as he might a hawk or a high-mettled horse, and she rewards him with strong sexual love and fierce loyalty. The submission of a woman like Kate is genuine and exciting, because she has something to lay down, her virgin pride and individuality."

At the end of the play, Katharina carols a gorgeous paean to wifely obedience that is not craven but triumphant, saturated with passionate regard for the man who has chosen her, of all women, to befriend and protect, and who is thus supremely worthy of her fiat: "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper—one that cares for thee and for thy maintenance commits his body to painful labor while thou liest warm at home, secure and safe." You go, girl!

The problem with *The Surrendered Wife* is that Doyle, although she uses the vocabulary of Katharina—Doyle describes herself as a "former shrew"—actually she comes across as Bianca, laboring tirelessly to manipulate both her spouse and, even more important, the hoped-for female consumers of her book and an entire line of *Surrendered Wife* products (counseling sessions, seminars) for sale on her pink-and-lavender *Surrendered Wife* website (*www.surrenderedwife.com*). What Doyle advocates for wives often doesn't seem so much surrendering as Higher Nagging, a way to get what you want by using a more effective strategy. "Instead of saying 'we need to get the kids piano lessons' or 'we need new mini-blinds,' try to say 'I want to get the kids piano lessons' and 'I want new mini-

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blinds,'" she advises in various ways over and over. "If you don't admit you want something, you won't get it."

In the background of Doyle's book lurks her husband of eleven years, John, an affable hunk or lunk, if his picture on the Internet is to be believed. Both Doyles have told the press that John has never read past the first chapter of *The Surrendered Wife*—and it's a good thing, too, because the rest of the chapters reveal that Laura, underneath her veneer of surrendered sweetness, holds him in thinly veiled contempt. Or held him in thinly veiled contempt until he managed at last to make himself useful by helping her self-publish *The Surrendered Wife*, which first emerged in 1999 from the St. Monday Press that the Doyles set up in their home in Costa Mesa, California. (Laura, who has a marketing background, shrewdly pitched her theories to newspapers and talk shows, persuading a major publisher, Simon & Schuster, to pick up the book this year, and sex-role theorist John "Men Are from Mars" Gray to write a cautious blurb touting her book as a "practical and valuable tool.")

Before then, as Laura frequently informs us, John was a walking catalogue of husbandly couch potato-hood: He lacked ambition; he didn't earn as much as his wife (a sore point in the money-fixated Doyle marriage); he didn't save for his retirement; he didn't pay the bills on time (the couple once had its electricity turned off); he couldn't drive very well; he didn't maintain the car very well; he didn't pick up after himself; he watched television for hours on end; and he wasn't very romantic. "For so long, I thought John needed to take more initiative and stop letting people walk all over him," she states, for the third or fourth time, in Chapter Eighteen, one of those chapters John mercifully hasn't read. All this is supposedly in the interest of dramatizing how "controlling" Laura used to be, but underneath it all, the dissatisfaction shows through, and you can't help wondering if her new tactic of "surrendering" to her husband isn't just a more subtle way to light a fire underneath his slow-moving behind.

In fact, on one level, *The Surrendered Wife* is a mordant, Joan Didion-esque saga of marriage à la mode in Southern California, with grandiosity (hers) on a collision course with inertia (his) and the joint bank account that is never quite flush enough to support the desired marital lifestyle, at least until now. From the book and its related media stories, we learn about the business that Laura started soon after her marriage and abandoned under a mountain of debt, the credit-card binging, the credit-rating nosedive, the condo she insisted on buying for the two of them, the sale of that same condo for less than she paid for it, the sessions in Debtors Anonymous.

Writing *The Surrendered Wife*, a pastiche of ideas resembling those of Gray and a Southern California marriage-therapy rival named Patricia Allen, who promises her clients "a lifetime of love," if they "ask for what they want," enabled Doyle finally to hit the jackpot she had dreamed of. There's a huge and lucrative market nowadays for how-to manuals on wifely submission, many of them geared to Southern Baptists and other evangelical Christians who take seriously the apostle Paul's admonitions to that effect in his New Testament letters. Like Doyle's, these books, with titles like *Me? Obey Him?* and *Liberated Through Submission*, feature icky pastel, floral-decorated jackets. (One top seller, Martha Peace's *Becoming a Titus 2 Woman*—a reference to one of Paul's epistles—displays a photograph of a porcelain coffee set on its cover, as though the apostle supported himself not as a tent-maker but as manager of the wedding-gift registry at Bloomingdale's.) Although Doyle herself professes belief in some sort of higher-power "Spirit," she has geared her book to an even larger secular market. In fact, some of the rewards she promises from becoming a surrendered wife are crassly material, such as "the miracle of greater prosperity." She offers some case-study examples: "Theresa's husband, Steve, got a $20,000-a-year-raise just a few months after she adopted the principles of a surrendered wife. Elizabeth's husband won a sales contest, made a huge bonus and got an all-expenses-paid trip just a month after she started surrendering."

Reading that, or visiting Doyle's website, with its pitches for $59-an-hour telephone sessions with her, or the setting up of Surrendered Circles for talking about *The Surrendered Wife*, you start to suspect that Doyle is still the same old control freak that she describes in its pages. Only this time around, the object of all that controlling is you, the surrendered consumer.

I offer a cheaper alternative for saving your marriage through wifely submission. Read and ponder this review carefully—it tells you everything that's in Doyle's book, minus the $13 price-tag and all the repetitions. Then go spend $3.99 for a copy of the Folger Library edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which Shakespeare says it all better than either Doyle or I can. Use the difference to treat yourself to a bottle of bubble bath. As Laura Doyle herself would be the first to say, you deserve it. ◆

Charlotte Allen is senior editor of Crisis *magazine.*

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What Fresh Hell Is This? A Guy Marooned in Women's Studies

Duke University grad student *Eric Adler* ended up in a women's studies class because of the vicissitudes of scheduling. He was promised that there was no party line. That was the first lie.

A BULLETIN BOARD at the entrance to Duke University's women's studies program proclaims to passersby that 1,160 students registered for its courses in the fall 2000 semester alone. More than any other sign, this message speaks to—and was intended to speak to—the vitality of this discipline. Indeed, the bulletin board as a whole does not seem to offer information so much as declarations of victory; despite our detractors, it says, we are still here, and more vibrant than ever.

Drawing by Charles Jaffé

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Advocates of women's studies, a "discipline" whose goals are anathema to the ideals of a traditional liberal arts education, say that those who criticize the field are either polemicists or mere journalists. Why, these people have never even sat in on one women's studies class! I wish you could say the same for me.

As a graduate student in classical studies at Duke University, I found myself, because of the vicissitudes of academic scheduling, a member of a women's studies seminar entitled "Foundations of U.S. Feminism, 1960—Present." It wasn't my first choice, but, after a mollifying meeting with a very pleasant women's studies administrator—she assured me that there was no "party line" in her department—I decided to see what women's studies at Duke had to offer.

At first, the class was very entertaining indeed. It met in the women's studies seminar room, a cozy chamber bedecked with drab posters championing a suitably multicultural array of women whose careers could bolster student self-esteem. One poster, for instance, lauded Anita Hill's "courageous testimony before an entirely white, male Senate judiciary"—not, I submit, the kind of pedagogical tool one will find on the walls of other departments at Duke. The instructor also appeared to have a distinct interest in the emotional well-being of her students. At our first meeting she told us that each class would commence with an opportunity for class members to present announcements concerning women-friendly topics: upcoming lectures, stray comments on recent events, etc. As she smiled widely at the beginning of our first class —a smile so emotive it seemed dangerously close to tears—I scolded myself for fearing that the course might degenerate into a totalitarian nightmare.

And I couldn't claim that I wasn't learning anything. Only midway through a series of introductions each student was compelled to offer the other participants, I gleaned a feature of women's studies classes as yet undetected by their critics—something I like to call the "women's studies nod." As each classmate blandly recited a few factoids about herself, the teacher and many of the other students—clearly more informed than I on matters of women's studies decorum—began vehemently nodding their approval. These were not nods that merely relayed agreement. Rather, they appeared to have a psychological, almost spiritual, import, as if the nodders were saying, "I don't simply agree with you, I *support* you."

And the nods proved to be an almost universally appropriate response to classroom banter. When a student bemoaned the evils of patriarchy, the class responded with a round of "women's studies nods." When the professor hastily employed the phrase "subaltern counterpublic," the students—as if they knew what that meant—offered another series of affirming nods. When the instructor informed us that, thanks to her family's frank discussions of gender, her sons put their hair in pigtails and beg to wear dresses to their elementary school, those hip to women's studies convention nodded even more fervently.

In fact, the nods were but one of the many features that rendered the class interaction so dissimilar to those of my other courses. I immediately realized that this was not a traditional academic environment. On the contrary, the class appeared to be a combination of *Romper Room* and an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. At our first session, the only other male in the class confessed that he, as a man, necessarily "oppresses" all women, adding that he was intrigued to have an opportunity to explore the ways in which he "doubly oppresses" all minority women. Another student, after offering a typically banal introduction, said that she desired to compose a master's thesis on the subject of Chicano drag queens. When the professor queried her about this choice, she said that she had chosen the project because it wouldn't require spending time in a library. No one else in the class seemed to find this remark noteworthy.

The intent of the course was to examine the nature of "second-wave" feminism through the lens of race. The syllabus divided the semester into three units: Chicana feminism, black feminism, and white feminism. This all struck me as fairly harmless. But matters turned sour—and quickly. Our readings proved to be chock-a-block with militant palaver and rebarbative nonsense. Chicana lesbian feminist Gloria Anzaldua, for instance, opined that "[Catholicism] and other institutionalized religions impoverish all life, beauty, pleasure." Her colleague Cherríe Moraga, in one of her more subtle poetic efforts, noted: "I hate white people"; elsewhere in her oeuvre she hoped for the dissolution of the United States, castigated "Anglo misogynist culture" for its "rape" of minorities, denounced the "'advances' of Western 'civilization,'" and related her dreams of killing white men. Kathleen Cleaver—former wife of the late Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver—offered a disquisition on the history of civilization, in which she charged Europe with culpability for all the world's problems. "Masculine intellectual systems are inadequate because they lack the wholeness that female consciousness, excluded from contributing to them, could provide," we learned from cultural feminist and award-winning poet Adrienne Rich.

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In short, we were treated to a treasure trove of cant.

This would have been less of a problem if the books and articles we were reading had been treated as historical texts. This was not the case, however. On the contrary, each week our professor treated these feminists as infallible prophets, thereby discouraging the students from offering anything but the most minuscule and mannered of criticisms. I had to learn this the hard way.

Encouraged by the administrator who insisted that there was no "party line," I began to voice my critiques of the demonizations in our feminist texts. Our professor—formerly a slight, nervous woman desperately attempting to demonstrate how "supportive" she was of the class' efforts—immediately dropped her folksy airs and went in for the kill. Clearly, she found my distaste for many of our feminists' esteem for Mao Zedong and Vladimir Lenin incomprehensible, if not infuriating. She would not allow me to assert that the assaults on Western culture in our readings were a mite simplistic. Instead, she—and a few of my fellow students—excoriated me for presenting "reactionary" views, and even discouraged me from speaking.

My deviancy briefly metastasized and other students grew tentatively critical of the messages of the texts. One noted that many of the Chicana feminist works we had read fostered and nurtured a frightening anti-white animus. Another ventured that one of our more truculent authors had done little more than gripe. Our professor was not amused. She patiently attempted to explain the texts she assigned. In response to criticism of the misandrist, anti-white fervor throughout the writing of Cherríe Moraga, our professor said that she liked to view Moraga's rancor as "poetic." Still, she seemed to be in danger of losing control of the class.

The class appeared to be a combination of* Romper Room *and an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.

Luckily for her, she had another plan of attack—a Plan B. The week after a particularly animated debate on Chicana feminism, she stepped out of the role of mere conversation "facilitator" and, almost halfway through the semester, got down to brass tacks, revealing the *raison d'être* of the course. After stating that America was a country awash in "aversive racism," she informed us that the goal of the course had nothing to do with critical engagement of the texts. Rather, we were to abandon what we "know about the world," "let go of defensive criticism," and stand in the shoes of the feminists we were reading, full of sympathy for their project. She bolstered this with a misinterpretation of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement.* If this "Kantian visiting" is done correctly, she told us, "part of what you think will have to change." The crucial task assigned to us was "to empathize" with the writers, and not to be so darned rational, critical, or—dare I say it!—objective.

As Tom Wolfe wrote in his essay "In the Land of the Rococo Marxists," students have learned to abide by the *diktats* of political correctness "because they know that to oppose it out loud is in poor taste." Consequently, I was deserted, as my fellow students adopted a policy of empathy. I was called in for a private meeting, in which the professor went on at length and with some energy about my inability to "empathize." I was a defeated man: We turned to the work of Audre Lorde, which characterized America as a "racist sexist cauldron," and there was nary a peep of dissension. If anyone had the slightest concern about Lorde's message, it was tactfully couched: "I completely agree with Audre Lorde, but…" or "I am utterly sympathetic to Lorde's description of patriarchy and racism, but…." The class dynamic had changed dramatically, and our professor was certainly gratified with the nods that indicated a touching ability to empathize.

With all that accursed "critical engagement" happily discarded, what did the class offer its students? Perhaps a woman's response to an article about young feminist devotees of punk rock music offers the best insight. Asked by the professor about the piece, this young woman relayed a tentative—yet, to her, utterly damning—criticism: "I thought I would be in this article," she mused, "but I definitely wasn't." The article was a failure precisely because it did not provide this student with sufficient opportunities for empathy. But this criticism seemed to be acceptable, evoking a warm response from our instructor, and a rush of deep "women's studies nods" from members of the class. From then on, the class engaged solely in solipsistic exercises of empathy for feminist theorists. We were not to bother with the academic rigor or the intellectual uncertainties a traditional liberal arts education presents.

We were there merely to nod. ◆

Eric Adler is a Ph.D. candidate in classical studies at Duke University.

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TWQ Interview

The Truth & Lynne Cheney

Petite second lady Lynne Cheney has taken on big targets—and won. What can we expect now that she REALLY has a megaphone?

SHE MAY BE second lady, but Lynne Cheney doesn't play second fiddle to anybody. Indeed, Washington Times *columnist Suzanne Fields once wryly described Lynne Cheney as "her own man." Fields added, "As a veep's wife, she can show what's rotten in the culture with the zest and zeal that Betty Ford brought to drug abuse."*

Cheney has been battling "what's rotten in the culture" ever since Ronald Reagan appointed her chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1986. There Cheney was appalled to learn the degree to which some of the nation's most prestigious cultural institutions were in the thrall of the trendy notion of political correctness. She made headlines defunding some of the most egregious of these programs and eventually wrote a book, Telling the Truth, *about PC's assault on the very notion that truth exists. But her legacy wasn't just about halting the march of PC—she is also responsible for funding Ken Burns' series on the Civil War.*

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A Ph.D. in English literature, Cheney has also been an editor at the Washingtonian *magazine, a TV pundit, and a novelist. She wrote* The Body Politic *with Vic Gold. It is a racy novel about the scheming wife of a vice president who ends up dead in bed with a network correspondent!*

Cheney is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. She and the vice president, high school sweethearts in Casper, Wyoming, have been married for thirty-six years. Cheney was a founding member of the Independent Women's Forum.

TWQ *editor Charlotte Hays spoke with Cheney in her office at the Old Executive Office Building next door to the White House. Rushing in from the White House mess and looking radiant in a dark green pants suit, she joked that since her feet didn't reach the floor she had to prop them on the coffee table. She talked about PC, gender studies, her next book, the vice president's cooking, and her favorite poet, William Butler Yeats. As the interview broke up, and she headed for a meeting with her staff, she recited:*

"I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

"And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:

"Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;

"And live alone in the bee-loud glade."

Now when was the last time an interview with a Washington powerhouse ended with a recitation of Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"?

TWQ: *Tell us about what you call the attack on truth in our schools and colleges?*

CHENEY: That was really the underlying topic of my last book, *Telling the Truth.* It's postmodernism, the notion that there is no such thing as truth. There's only your version of events and my version and Charles' version and Harry's version, and the one that prevails will be that of whoever is the most powerful. This seems to fly in the face of the way scholarship has proceeded for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

When I was nominated to serve as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1986, I spoke at my confirmation hearings of the enduring truths that emerge from a study of great authors such as Homer and Euripides, Milton and Shakespeare, and Locke and Montesquieu. I talked about Matthew Arnold, the nineteenth-century poet and essayist about whom I had written my doctoral dissertation. As he saw it, humanistic study is "a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." But I soon discovered, after I became chairman of the NEH, that, for a number of academics, the truth was not merely irrelevant—it no longer existed. As these academics saw it, all things we think of as true are really constructs of dominant groups, the creation of the powerful. I think this is a very disturbing development.

TWQ: *What has happened to words like "merit," fairness," and "quality," when used in the academic environment?*

CHENEY: They are all seen as representing an unjust regime. Even the idea of competition is regarded with suspicion because it divides people into winners and losers. In a completely egalitarian society, you don't want to have winners and losers, so the thinking goes. It seems to me that expecting to be able to get rid of the competitive drive, first of all, flies in the face of human nature—and little girls certainly have this drive, as much as little boys do, or at least the little girls I have observed in my immediate family have it. And so the idea that we are somehow going to get rid of this in order to have a fairer society seems ridiculous on the face of it. It is a poor pedagogical approach.

TWQ: *On the surface, multiculturalism sounds as if we simply favor learning about other cultures, and that is a good thing. But you have suggested that there might be a hidden agenda to multiculturalism. Can you explain this?*

CHENEY: Well, this is a matter of definition, isn't it? Everyone wants the children in our society, as they proceed through school, to learn about the wonderful contributions that have been made to human civilization by people in all parts of the world. There is no question that this is a good goal and a worthy pursuit. What is often done, though, in the name of multiculturalism is to apply two sets of standards—one to our own culture that everything that's happened here is dead wrong, that Western expansion was totally bad, that our history is a story of oppression; and to look at other cultures and have the opposite attitude. I think multiculturalism is an idea that we need to embrace. It is a good thing, but we need to think of multiculturalism as looking at all the cultures of the world evenhandedly.

TWQ: *What are some of the solutions to the problems in our schools? I understand that you are writing a book on education.*

CHENEY: Well, it's interesting because I went into this book not trying to expand the last book I wrote, *Telling the Truth.* But there is in our education establishment a kind of political correctness. It is not the politics of left and right. It is an ideology about how children are. And the prevailing view in education schools, and many of the professional education establishments,

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is that little children are like flowers—*if you just water them a little bit, they* will blossom. And that blossoming will result in their reading, and their discovering how to multiply, and their discovering the principles of science. It is a view that is not accepted by mainstream researchers.

I was just reading Steven Pinker, who is a neuro-psychologist at MIT, and he was talking about how the notion that reading is a natural activity—that it is learned as naturally as speaking—is misguided, especially if you think of it in evolutionary terms. We only learned to read pretty late in the evolutionary cycle, and it is highly improbable that we are hard-wired to read. Indeed, if we were, I would go on to ask: Why are so many children having trouble with reading? But that is the prevailing notion that holds the education establishment captive, so to speak. I am interested in how that happens and what can be done.

TWQ: *Many states, including Virginia, have adopted standards of learning including a new emphasis of history over social studies. Is a knowledge of history important to being a citizen?*

CHENEY: It is, and Virginia's standards of learning are good in history. Checker Finn, who is head of the Fordham Foundation, has done a wonderful service for all of us interested in education reform by setting up a review of standards. This really allows you to see which standards are thoughtfully constructed and pedagogically realistic and intelligent. So not all standards are good. It is a great pleasure, though, to see good history standards such as the ones in Virginia. It's crucial, if we are going to maintain our republic, that children understand how we became a republic and the dangers to that republic. They need to understand, as well, the context of the world. They need to understand how fortunate they are to live in this country.

It is almost impossible for a six-year-old who has a moderate amount of access to a television set to miss things that six-year-olds should miss.

TWQ: *It seems that politicization of public discourse has affected the way we talk about almost everything. For example, when kids shoot other kids at school, we don't try to look for the root of the problem, and many people use the shootings to promote an agenda, in this case gun control. What about this?*

CHENEY: One of the interesting things about the tragedy in California—in which a fifteen-year-old boy killed classmates—is that this didn't happen. Afterwards, there wasn't much talk about gun control. I think that there is a growing recognition that these tragedies raise cultural concerns, that it is very difficult for parents to raise their children in a culture that increasingly glorifies violence—violence against women and violence against gay people. That it is difficult to raise children in an environment when there is so much irresponsible sexual activity on television. You try to raise your kids to be responsible, but one recent study showed that it is almost impossible for a six-year-old who has a moderate amount of access to a television set to miss things that six-year-olds should miss.

TWQ: *We spend a lot of money protecting women, as mandated by the Violence Against Women Act. Should we also be concerned with violence against men?*

CHENEY: Well, sure. It's been a long time actually since I thought about the Violence Against Women Act, but it seems to me that violence against children, for example, should have an equal claim on our attention. I would feel more confident about our culture generally if the people who were advocates of legislating violence out of our society would also speak up about the violence that seems to be an almost gratuitous part of the entertainment industry.

TWQ: *In your book, you quoted a professor who was talking about the scene in the movie* The Graduate *in which the Dustin Hoffman character is advised, "The future is plastics." The professor says today you would say, "The future is gender studies." What do you make of the proliferation of all these gender study classes?*

CHENEY: Gertrude Himmelfarb, for whom I have the greatest respect, is a fantastic scholar. I wish I could write nearly as intelligently as she does. But she and I were having a conversation the other day, and she thinks that we are seeing an easing off of this on campuses. I have focused on kindergarten through twelfth grade recently, so I'm not as much of an expert on this as

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Gertrude. I think it is heartening that she sees some diminishment of this notion that we need to look at everything in the world through the prism of race, class, or gender.

TWQ: How do you think that the media performed in the last election, particularly during the recount in Florida?

CHENEY: During the recount, I found myself glued to the television set. I don't think it was self-interest. It was one of the most fascinating stories. There was self-interest, too, I'm sure, but it was also a fascinating story. Even though the media clearly overdid it—making it seem as though they had a new nugget of fact or understanding at every moment, when often they didn't—they were sure playing to where I was emotionally. I think the media's worst performance was the election night. First of all, calling Florida for Al Gore before Floridians in the Panhandle had voted—and, of course, the Panhandle is an area that tends to favor Republicans. I think it is very easy to make an argument that this, in fact, suppressed some Bush votes. And then they went back and forth so rapidly.

As a conservative, I always feel as though my view is not represented as fully and completely in the media as the liberal view is. I did feel that during the election from time to time, but during the recount I did not.

TWQ: You and Vice President Cheney wrote a wonderful book, Kings of the Hill, *in 1983, which profiled various congressional figures—Henry Clay, Thaddeus Stevens, and James K. Polk, among them. Who is the most interesting and compelling congressional figure of the last twenty years?*

CHENEY: I think it is probably Newt Gingrich. He did an absolutely amazing thing when he mobilized forces on the Hill, and across the country as well, and captured Congress. It has probably been long enough ago that people don't remember what it was like to be a Republican in Congress and in Washington through those long years in the desert, forty or more years when we were not in control of the House. We had the Senate briefly, but, gosh, to be a House member and to look back historically at the last twenty years, you just have to give Newt an amazing amount of credit for his vision and conviction.

TWQ: Elaine Showalter has called you a "feminist intellectual." You also have been called a "right wing warrior" in the culture wars. How do you feel about those two characterizations?

CHENEY: Well, it sounds to me like the first is an approving description and the second isn't, so I would start there. I don't mind being labeled a "feminist intellectual" as long as I get a chance to define what I mean by feminism, which has to do with recovering the story of what women have accomplished and lived through, not just in our society but around the world. If it means being convinced that women should have equal opportunities to achieve in their lives, if it means believing firmly that women should be able to make choices about family and career, if that is what it means, then I am happy to be called a feminist. If, on the other hand, it means the whole menu of orthodoxies that have become attached to the feminist movement—*i.e.*, you can't be pro-life; you can't like Clarence Thomas; you can't be a Republican—then it is an inaccurate description. And the last one I don't like much—just because it sounds like they are trying to insult me.

TWQ: How do you see your role in the Bush years? What are you going to be doing?

CHENEY: I am going to be a very interested and supportive observer, not a participant in making policy, but absolutely supportive of the directions in which this president needs to take us.

TWQ: I understand the vice president does the cooking, and I was wondering if you have a favorite menu.

CHENEY: Nobody cooks now; it is quite wonderful. We have Navy enlisted personnel in our house, the vice president's house, and they cook a heart-healthy diet, and that is a great pleasure. My husband's cooking is pretty standard, but he does like to use the grill. If I could choose any meal that I would really like, with the virtue of being good for me, it would be grilled salmon and broccoli with lemon and some pine nuts.

TWO: Who is your favorite living artist?

CHENEY: That is an impossible question. Oh, maybe Helen Frankenthaler. She is really quite wonderful. We're lucky enough that in a few weeks we are going to be hanging a Helen Frankenthaler in the vice president's residence. It is a wonderful painting called "Lush Green," and it has an amazing vitality. Helen is not only remarkably talented, she is very wise.

TWQ: Favorite artist of all time?

CHENEY: You know I find myself going back again and again to William Butler Yeats' poetry. This isn't a visual artist, but I was just thinking about how well his poems have aged over the course of a lifetime. I can remember reading his poem "Among School Children" when I was a graduate student. He has some other wonderful poems, but this one now takes on special meaning: He talks about visiting classes of children, and he is a "sixty-year-old smiling public man," and now I am, of course, an "almost sixty-year-old smiling public woman." But you know, he has been with me ever since I was a twenty-year-old, non-public, smiling person and his poetry follows me through life pretty well. ◆

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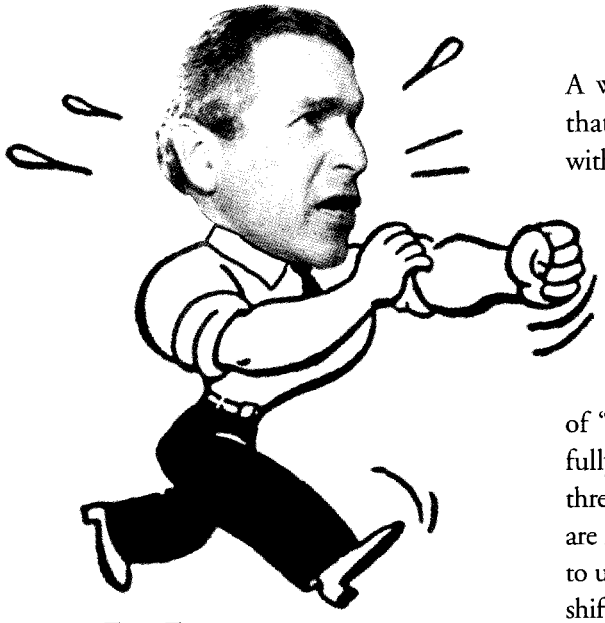
THE WAR OF WORDS



Mr. Malaprop Reclaims the Language of Politics

You think George W. was born with a silver foot in *his* mouth? Think again. ***Heather Richardson Higgins*** explains what Bush is up to wordwise.

A WONDERFUL IRONY of our times is that a man ridiculed for his run-ins with the English language is reinvesting words with their original moral meanings, and, in the process, making these words accessible again. George W. Bush's opponents, who poked riotous fun at his intellect and thought nothing of "messing with Texas," have yet to fully appreciate what a devastating threat he poses for their cause. And they are not alone: Even Bush allies have yet to understand how fundamentally he is shifting the national conversation.

But think about it:

What if those who believe in the importance of personal responsibility could no longer be summarily dismissed as cold, calculating Scrooges? What if those who decry the failed systems of the past could no longer be caricatured as people who'd starve children rather than provide school lunches, as those who'd steal Social Security, devastate the public schools, and place sentries in every woman's bedroom?

What if "compassionate conservative" didn't seem to be an oxymoron?

Those who have signed onto the conceit that any social problem can be fixed, if the government just does enough, have managed to change the meanings of words. "Tolerance"—a word whose very definition presupposes a moral standard—has come to stand for the kind of approval that reflects the abolition of standards. "Liberty," no longer freighted with the responsibility to do what we ought, now means the license to do pretty much what we please. "Peace" has come to signify pacifism and unilateral disarmament.

The removal of the underlying concept that we are responsible for our own behavior—and also responsible for helping our neighbor—was a critical step in the late twentieth-century's perversion of language. Traditional notions of justice and fairness had always recognized that we are created different in our talents and aspirations, so that, even in a perfect world, outcomes would be diverse. Nonetheless, they held that functioning adults, regardless of social standing, were accountable for their choices and actions.

SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, the burden of responsibility and accountability was shifted from the individual to government. Language was co-opted to ratify this: "Equality" ceased to reflect our claims as citizens and morphed into abstract and unattainable outcomes disassociated from individual effort. "Justice" became a rallying cry of class warfare and grievance politics, rationalizing new "rights" (a term also radically redefined) and greater government action. "Racism" and "discrimination" have drifted from an original premise of "not colorblind" to a world in which outcomes must be color and gender conscious, and every perceived social slight settled in court.

Over time various words became anathema. We cringed when we heard salvos about "the poor" because of the new assumption of a society of victims and oppressors now embedded in the word. "The poor" now required an agenda that was all about "rights"; responsibilities were nowhere to be seen. Our ire rose at purported calls for "compassion," because we knew we were hearing code

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for the expansion of government, new entitlements, and the involuntary redistribution of wealth.

We chafed when we were chastised about our failing schools, because this was just a ploy to increase funding to special-interest bureaucracies that had given us academically inferior and dangerous schools to begin with. References to "community" presaged an anthem not to real community but to more government and an excuse to redefine the family so broadly that it might as well become the village. Even calls to care about the children were camouflage for the social agenda-du-jour, wherein every noble yen and moral obligation is coupled with yet another government program.

Fine and noble words were poisoned. And so, a bizarre thing happened: Those who had traditionally advocated that the natural corollary of limited government was a citizenry that assumed responsibility for the more vulnerable were no longer able to articulate this vision. The words required to do so had been distorted to the point of being unusable.

THOSE WHO BELIEVED in personal responsibility and private compassion have done their best with what language was left: They initially criticized the size and expense of the programs. They learned to attack the dependency such programs fostered, the failures that inevitably followed, and the lives destroyed. All valid, but all inadequate.

Conservatives could criticize, but they largely lacked the language to explain what they cared about, what they intended to do, and why they cared. In short, conservatives had a hard time explaining what they stood for, even, sadly, to themselves.

President Bush's delivery may not always be smooth, but reread his acceptance speech at the Philadelphia convention or his inaugural address: He is able to use the moral language of conscience and compassion, duty and equality, and tolerance and justice in ways that are unfettered by thirty years of reinterpretation. Bush knows that human dignity and real solutions to tough problems require more than just material aid.

His focus is on character and responsibility and on genuine compassion born of our obligations to each other. Bless him, he talks largely about principles—which are rooted in morals and presume knowable truth—rather than values, which are squishy and deliberately relative.

Bush sees Americans as equal in their status as persons, whatever their standing in life, and as such respects all of us, calling constantly for unity and refusing to pit one group against another. Bush can describe his Republican Party as "the party of idealism" because he believes in the noble possibility of the better instead of unrealistic utopian goals.

In short, Bush is capturing the rhetoric of the left. The difference is that his policies might actually help to achieve some of those goals, rather than subverting them. A case in point is feminism.

Bush's idealism is what a mature feminism ought to espouse. It could not be further from the whiny replacement of thought with feeling that characterizes contemporary feminism and that is the key factor in what is criticized as "feminization of politics." Feminism as we now know it has never grown up.

Feminism first erred in trying to emulate the most crass and selfish of male perks—casual sex, freedom from commitment, a time horizon largely unencumbered by biology, and status based on career and power. Feminism patted itself on the back for its virtuousness for "getting it," but practiced special-interest selfishness—whining about economic alienation yet demanding double standards and fomenting class warfare.

A MATURE FEMINISM ought to call everyone, male and female, to the harmony of the whole of society, to have great hearts, to think more of others than of self, to remember that, while we are all individuals, we are also all social creatures who share in the public square. Our status as free citizens only increases our responsibility and obligation—not to foist the burden off onto Other People's Money and Other People's Time (the essence of the desire to have government be the responsible agent). We must remember that, as President Bush puts it, "compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government."

If Bush and the party he leads can once again speak the language of compassion and live out its consequences, if their rhetoric and their policies reflect a vision of human harmony, justice, responsibility, and peace, then they will have earned enough moral capital that the "talking points" of their opponents will sound shrill and manufactured. This could set the stage for a time when untouchable issues (race, abortion) could actually become discussible once again.

If we get there, it means, too, that the core arguments raised against compassionate conservatism will ring hollow and opponents may find themselves marginalized for years to come. So whose intellect are we questioning? *Yee-haa*! ◆

Heather Richardson Higgins is the vice chairman of the Independent Women's Forum.

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Madison Avenue Man: He's Dumb, He's a Slob, He's Selling Kleenex

Advertising executives are wary of making fun of women. But when ***Ivy McClure Stewart*** and ***Kate Kennedy*** turned on the TV, they realized that guys are now fair game. Why?

16 *Drawings by Sandy McClelland*

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Moaning from beneath his fuzzy flannel sheets, the big lug whines that every breath hurts and blubbers that his nose is raw from the constant rubbing. In comes Super Mom, armed with the latest in tissue technology: Kleenex Cold-Care. He's relieved. Then the voice-over: "The bigger the man, the bigger the baby."

"It is now absolutely acceptable to show men as thick, as incompetent, as sex-objects, as figures of fun, because it has become politically correct to do so. Men are fair game. But God forbid that you do that to women," Richard Block, global planning director of J. Walter Thompson, an international advertising firm whose clients include Kraft and Ford Motor Company, told the *Sunday Business Journal.*

If you don't believe this, just ask the advertising execs who use ludicrous images of men to sell everything from Levi's to VISA cards. Fire up the remotes, guys—you're going to want to change the channel.

Oh, Dad, Poor Dad

Take, for example, the Campbell's soup commercial that paints the picture of a cozy family supper. "M'm! m'm! good!" cry the kids, who thank mom profusely for making such a mouth-watering meal. The soothing background voice spells it out: It's a delicious and oh-so-easy meal that comes from a can. Step one: Brown some chicken. Step two: Empty a can of Campbell's cream of mushroom soup into a pot and *voilà*, your kids will love it. Only, guess what? Mom didn't make this meal; it seems this task was easy enough even for dumb, old dad to handle.

"Dumb dads" seem to play especially prominent roles in today's commercials. And, rendering these poor chaps even more helpless, they are usually borderline obese. A case in point: A pudgy dad, face smudged with telltale signs that he's been sneaking slabs of the Honeybaked Ham he's fetched, wails to his attractive, well-turned out wife, "You don't think *I* ate it, do you?"

"There is definitely a poor image out there of men," says Tracie Snitker, government relations director for the Men's Health Network, an organization that monitors the depiction of men in mass media. "These kinds of campaigns are subtle, but they do pervade our inner consciousness."

Super Slobs for Super Bowl

VISA, perhaps the worst offender, showed a seriously anti-male ad during this year's Super Bowl. Again, this one features a corpulent guy's guy lounging on his sofa in his dirty undershirt, which barely covers his beer gut. The camera pans down, exposing his socked feet in a perpetual twitch. He's picking popcorn out of his teeth, and is engrossed in a black-and-white television cartoon. All the while, his dutiful, beautiful wife is giving her new vacuum a test-run. As if this poor slob couldn't be any worse, he barks, "You missed a spot!" Unfazed, his wife turns the nozzle on him and sucks him up. "Huh, it really does work," she says looking down into the tube that swallowed her husband whole.

VISA spent approximately $2.3 million just to air this thirty-second spot during the Super Bowl, begging the question: How does this sell VISA cards? What is evident is that their message about the state of the American male was delivered loud and clear, and perhaps to the audience it was designed to entice—women. They obviously had the attention of ABC's Cokie Roberts, who highlighted what is becoming a new Super Bowl tradition for some women: watching solely for the commercials. "For some of us the most fun part of the Super Bowl is the ads. And this year there seems to be a theme, a tease. It does have to be funny, and it also has to be very creative and as I say, for some of us, particularly those of us in skirts, it's the best part of the game, " she noted on *This Week.*

The Can't Do-It-Yourselfer

You might think a rugged product like Levi's would hesitate to make fun of guys. But consider this ad: It begins with sirens blaring as the ambulance roars to the scene. A paramedic rushes to the aid of a sickly man on the verge of death, curled up in the fetal position on his bed. Carrying a cooler containing what seems to be some vital organ, the paramedic summons the man's attention and reveals the lifesaver. It's a pair of Levi's jeans. It seems that this poor schlepp can't even get out of bed, never mind dressed. But once he musters the strength to pull on his hand-delivered Levi's, he is infused with life.

Along the same lines, there is an ad that features an incompetent buffoon who can't get his car stereo to work. Meanwhile, his frustrated and infinitely smarter wife looks on with pity. Luckily, she is clever enough to use the Yellow Pages to call a real professional.

"Women like thinking they have the upper hand and we were taught that we've never had that. That is why these ads are so effective," says Snitker.

Not surprisingly some self-proclaimed media watchdog groups don't agree that Madison Avenue execs are laughing all the way to the bank at the expense of males. The National Organization for Women (NOW) maintains that it's the other way around, fretting that "80 percent of fourth-grade girls

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are dieting to reach ridiculous beauty standards set by advertisers and the media." (In that case, how long will it be before the men of this country seek counseling?)

To counter what it regards as Madison Avenue's unfair portrayals of women, NOW hosts its annual "Love Your Body Day" in September in a concerted effort to "spark dialogue across this nation on the impact of harmful media messages and images of women."

NOW's press release about their day of bodily celebration declares, "It is a day of action to speak out against ads and images of women that are offensive, harmful, dangerous, and disrespectful. We hope that you will join us in raising our voices in opposition to beauty standards that are unrealistic and unhealthy, and in breaking down the stereotypes that discriminate against people based on size and appearance."

Excuse me, Ms. Ireland, have you watched TV lately?

Mike Flynn, senior vice president of D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles, and a lecturer in universities on advertising, says that ads that feature unattractive stereotypes of either men or women "are not likely to be successful" since they do not depict "reality or aspirations." "In advertising," Flynn adds, "you have got to show people in one of two ways, either as they are now, or how they wish to be. It is politically incorrect to make fun of women. But men are an open target."

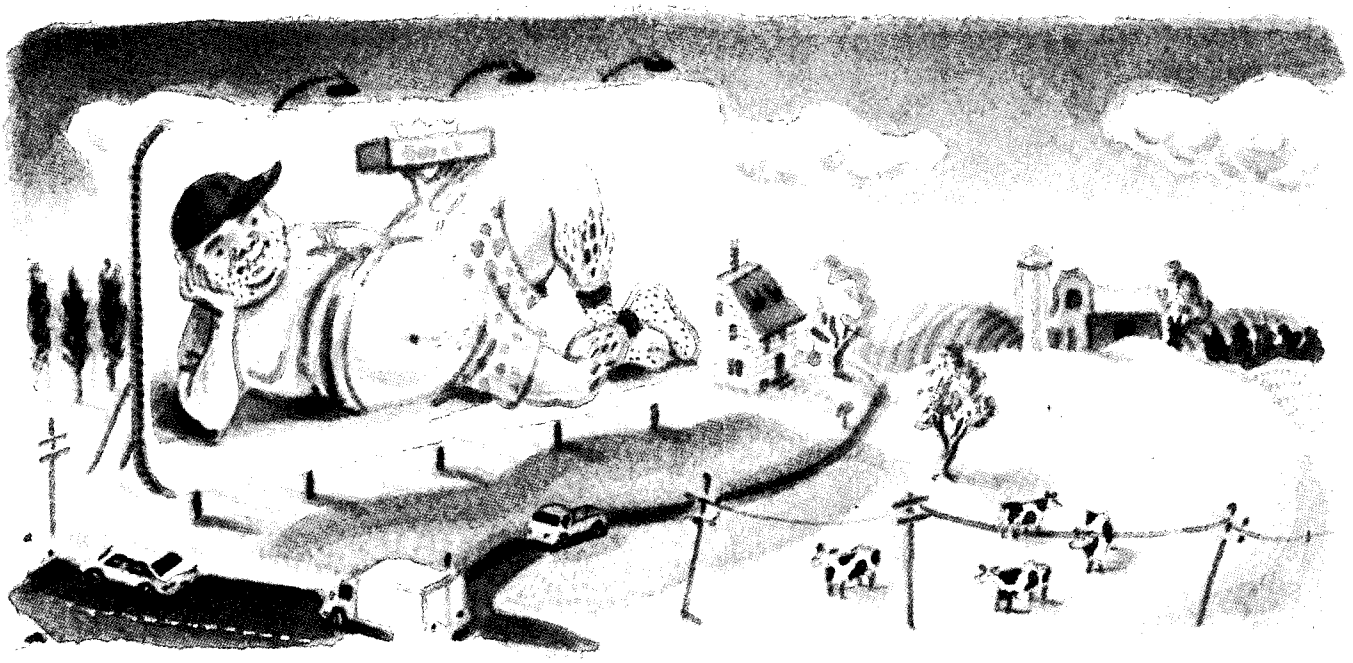
But is a backlash brewing? An ad was yanked from Canadian television after viewers complained that it crossed the line. In it, a hunky man in a T-shirt was chained to a kitchen stove, while his glamorous mate left for her high-paying corporate job. The T. Eaton department store approved the ad as part of a series intended to tell consumers that it had radically changed its image, but yanked the "Chained" ad after objections were raised that it exploited and objectified men.

For years, the advertising industry was castigated for portraying women as half-wits, more concerned with vacuum cleaner bags and casseroles than matters of the mind. But, does reversing sexual stereotypes accomplish anything? Who wins when one group is pilloried in order to please another?

Flynn, whose firm creates ads for Coca-Cola and TWA, believes man-mocking ads are not likely to garner "much vocal opposition from men" in the United States. Instead, "men will react with their pocketbooks," withholding their dollars instead of spending them.

We're not sure, but you can bet that most dads will think twice (if they haven't already) before buying Campbell's, VISA, Levi's, or Kleenex. Still, according to Flynn, women do most of the household shopping. In the ad industry selling is the name of the game: If absurd male characters make merchandise fly off the shelves, the "dumb dude" is likely to remain a staple of television advertising and, perhaps more important, our inner consciousness. ◆

Ivy McClure Stewart is managing editor of The Women's Quarterly. *Kate Kennedy is campus project manager for the Independent Women's Forum and associate editor of SheThinks.org.*



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The Token Man

The Stupid Party No Longer

Wladyslaw Pleszczynski chortles over the media's learning disability.

It's become the conventional wisdom: George W. Bush isn't the numskull his political opponents tried to make him out to be throughout last year's campaign. We have it on their own word, so it must be official. Who today recalls Paul Begala's anti-Bush tract, "Is Our Children Learning?" or pays attention to Jacob Weisberg's "Bushisms of the Day"? Even before Bush won plaudits for his handling of the China affair, the *New York Times* editorially declaimed: "Let us give George W. Bush credit for something beyond efficiency, beyond assembling a skilled staff, and beyond being smarter than *Saturday Night Live* gives him credit for. Mr. Bush has demonstrated that he takes the presidency seriously."

Meanwhile, in an open letter to a former president who did not take the presidency seriously, *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen confessed that the "Marc Rich episode" is "a pie in the face of anyone who ever defended" Bill Clinton. "You may look bad, Bill, but we look just plain stupid." Nine years it took Cohen to figure out he's been used? Democrat after Democrat these days is breaking out with similar symptoms of slow-learner disability. At this rate the GOP may never again be known as the stupid party.

It was fun while it lasted. Sure, there are still some incorrigibles around who call Bush a "moron" (Martin Sheen) or write that "I may have erred when I called Bush dumb. He's not dumb, he's just not paying attention. He thinks he won!" (Tony Kornheiser—before the latest figures from Florida showed Bush *had* won) or claim that Bush confuses "retroactive" with "radioactive" (Bill Maher). But Bush just isn't living up to liberal expectations.

Along with his wife he's given the presidency an aura of royalty. In appearance, temperament, and demeanor he appears a natural, likable leader who does his duty smartly and competently—just like the Harvard MBA he happens to be. More interesting yet, as president he effortlessly stands out in contrast to his rogue predecessor. Forgotten is that Bush actually ran against Al Gore, and that it was Gore's intellectual pretensions that Bush could never match—as if anyone remotely human would ever want to.

Last November 6, the folks at *Slate* magazine compiled a remarkable document: Forty of its employees and contributors explained who they would vote for on election day. Thirty-two explained they were going with Gore. Not all had coherent reasons for doing so—"I think Gore is nearly as smart in the realm of governance as he is stupid in the realm of campaigning," Timothy Noah wrote—but when it came to why they opposed Bush, group-think and unanimity rolled into one.

One contributor warned that if Bush won we'd be "living in a country with a baboon president."

A copy editor wrote: "The thought of him trying to smirk his way through tense Mideast peace negotiations is too much to take."

"An unabashedly anti-choice, anti-gay, geographically, and mathematically challenged candidate whose attention span and grasp of detail rival that of a moderately alert ninth-grader," is how another copy editor described Bush.

"Contemplation is to Bush what spinach is to a spoiled child," an editorial assistant declared.

"Dubya, I fear, would not have the vaguest idea what to do with, or in, the Oval Office," said one contributor. "I have a bipartisan disdain for Dubya's candlepower, and it is quite clear the guy is lazy."

Those were the days when the smart set had Bush pegged. Since then he's gone on to unanticipated glory, while their fellow Gore has been relegated to off-the-record lecturing at the Columbia Journalism School. Gore's name was briefly floated as a candidate for the presidency of Harvard, but then it turned out he wasn't smart enough for that job. Somehow, in our society, know-it-alls always get the short end of the stick. ◆

Wladyslaw Pleszczynski is editor of The American Spectator Online (www.spectator.org).

Drawing by Yuri Kolyadenko

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When Newt Gingrich championed the cause of orphanages, it was further proof that he was an ogre. ***John Seita*** argues that orphanages aren't such a bad idea. He should know.

The Road to Home—Is It Time to Bring Back Orphanages?

OVER THE LAST DECADE or so there has been a great and vigorous debate about what to do with the increasingly visible population of children taken out of their homes for reasons of neglect, abuse, and parental abandonment. In response, policymakers have made adoptions easier, put more resources into the foster care system, and made heroic attempts to strengthen fragile families through what are called "family preservation" initiatives. Each of these strategies has met with varying degrees of success, depending upon whom you talk to and which evaluation findings you believe.

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Another approach gaining currency in some quarters is what were once called orphanages but are now often referred to as "residential education." Newt Gingrich championed this cause for a brief moment in the mid-1990s and it still remains controversial—but not to me.

Norman Rockwell's view of America, with its idyllic and well-scrubbed, cherub-faced children playing happily under the watchful gaze of protective parents and neighbors did not look anything like my childhood. For seven years I lived in long-term residential care. My life there wasn't normal, not at all. But then again, it wasn't bad either, especially when compared to how I used to live, before court authorities placed me there when I was twelve. For several years after my placement, I slept in a big rectangular dorm room with eleven other equally displaced boys, all of them not living at home with their parents. I have lots of memories of that orphanage, most of them positive.

For some reason, the morning routine, which most wouldn't consider routine at all, is still deeply etched in my mind. "Pop," the craggy-faced, puritanical-acting house father, would quietly steal into the dorm at precisely 6:00 A.M. each and every day. But I could hear his creaky knees as he approached the dorm, and I quickly learned to expect the flick of the light switch by his bony translucent hands. Yet for some reason, it was no less disturbing than hearing a thunderclap inside of my head. Blinding lights found twelve boys immediately jumping out of six brown-painted metal bunk beds onto a bland gray uncarpeted tile floor with an almost military precision. Thump, thump, thump went twelve pairs of feet almost in unison. One had to be careful that a "topper" (a boy in the top bunk bed) didn't accidentally jump onto a "bottomer" (a boy in the bottom bed) during this exercise in organized chaos.

Upon hitting the floor, we removed both sheets, one cover, a two-inch thick floppy mattress, and an even thinner pillow from our bed frames, threw the whole mess onto the floor, flipped the mattress over, and made the bed. Pop often threatened to bounce a quarter off of our beds—which we made up "military style"—to see if it could reach some prescribed height. He never did bounce a quarter off anyone's bed so I suppose that this was just his way of teasing us. Pop was a stern disciplinarian from West Virginia. All of the guys called him "Stone Face" behind his back because of his rugged face and refusal to smile.

Having made our beds in lightning time, we rushed downstairs to wash up, get dressed, and start to prepare breakfast. Some of us set the table; others cooked oatmeal, made toast, or buffed the floors. Then we would eat, and we all cleaned up. Finally, we would brush our teeth and head for school with our group. It was very efficient, albeit without much warmth.

At dinnertime, we all wore sports coats and ties, and the dining room table was set with a white linen tablecloth. Each utensil had its place, as did our water glasses. To the left of the plate was a cloth napkin beneath a fork and a knife. To the right was our spoon and a glass filled with water. Whenever I set the table today, I still use that arrangement. Our meal was served in a formal way by two of our fellow residents. The servers were resplendent, wearing starched white aprons. Adorning their left arms were starched and folded linen cloths. Servers would hold out a dish of food, and we would each take a serving. This ritual went on until all were served, which usually took about fifteen minutes. Then Pop would take the first bite, followed by "Mom" (the house mother). Finally, the rest of us could eat. This was a touch of civility and discipline that most of us had never experienced. In spite of my rebellious ways, I found this structure and orderliness comforting.

Jumping up before dawn like a Pavlovian trained dog at the flip of a light switch by an old man before sunrise or wearing a coat and tie to dinner was hardly a typical childhood. Still it was more normal than my string of nearly twenty failed prior court ordered placements into a variety of foster homes, group homes, detention facilities, and short term children's "warehouses" in my native Cleveland. The courts ordered me to be placed following many episodes like the one I once wrote about as follows:

As a five-year-old, I watched my mother's latest husband relentlessly beat her. During a short argument at dinner, he exploded at my mother and nearly jumped over the kitchen table, the one that we'd gotten at a garage sale, pulled her forcefully from her chair, grabbed her by the hair and threw her against the wall. He banged her head repeatedly against the kitchen wall. The crack crack crack of her head bouncing off the wall sometimes even now makes an impression in my mind; I can still hear it. After only a few seconds of this beating, I saw blood gushing from her skull and then splatter on the wall. She screamed that she was "seeing stars." I remember her pleading that he "may as well go ahead and kill me." Then he abruptly stopped beating her, loaded us into an old blue Pontiac, and drove my battered mother to the hospital emergency room. Shortly thereafter, they were divorced and my life soon took a turn for the worse, if you can imagine that.

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The kind of violence that my mother suffered at the hands of her various husbands and boy friends was life-altering for all of us. She went on to live a life of misery and poverty without her children, and for her I am sad. As a child, though, understanding her problems was not within the scope of my maturity. But it is clear to me now that home was no home for me, even though I was forced to endure a childhood of helplessness and loneliness in many placements, and I never again, after we were separated, saw my brother and sister. Here is how a social worker described my dismal home:

"When the women's bureau investigated the home there was no food; there were broken beer bottles strewn on the floor and the place was in a state of utter dishevelment. Mother had been leaving the children unsupervised most of the time. The children were all very undernourished."

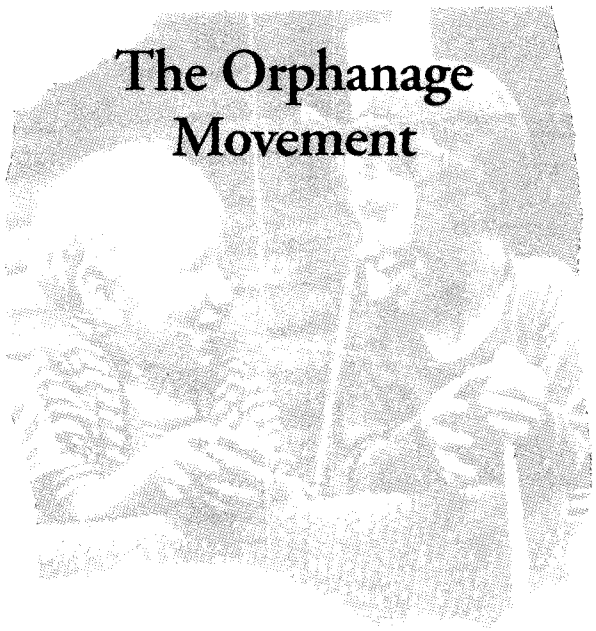
These wrenching experiences are no longer vivid or haunting and for that I am grateful, but I'd be a fool to forget them since they inform my thinking, advocacy, and action on behalf of children who can no longer be cared for in their natural homes. Clearly, I did not have a traditional family and often felt different for not having had a family. However, I am here today because rather than a real family I had a virtual family, which, it turns out, was better at raising me than was my real family.

Certainly my experience in a long-term orphanage was a bit odd, yet I did learn about things like goal setting, persistence, honesty, morals, fair play, spirituality, a sense of purpose, respect for others and self, dignity, hard work, and the capacity to dream the American Dream. Plus, I had fun. Fishing, swimming, bowling, roughhousing, and sneaking High-C fruit juice out of the cottage pantry late at night are fond memories and have shaped my life, but my good fortune was not and is not shared by many less fortunate children.

Who are these Kids?

RICHARD MCKENZIE, a professor of economics at the University of California at Irvine and a graduate of an or-

The Orphanage Movement



"OUR MOVEMENT IS QUIET," said orphanage advocate Richard McKenzie, "but it's unstoppable." McKenzie, an author and economics professor at the University of California at Irvine, grew up in an orphanage.

Far from harboring bitter memories of an Oliver Twist childhood, McKenzie believes that children placed in a residential home can benefit enormously from the structure and stability that are all too often absent from the foster care system.

A child in foster care, McKenzie noted, may be bounced from place to place too often to put down roots. Twenty-three percent of children in foster care live in at least two homes during their time in "the system," while another 20 percent have five placements; an additional 7 percent have seven placements. That's about half being bounced from pillar to post.

"We know from the first large-scale survey of 1,600 alumni from nine orphanages in the South and Midwest that the dismissal of the orphanage as an option was far too quick and related to some ingrained and obsolete Dickensian images of orphanages," McKenzie told a congressional hearing on child care.

According to the study McKenzie cited, an overwhelming majority—85 percent—of residential home alumni look at their experiences favorably. Their college attendance is 39 percent higher than the general population of their age group.

While the public debates orphanages versus foster care, Donnie Costigan, who went on to Virginia's Bluefield College, believes he already knows the answer—Costigan refers to Boys' Home, a residential facility in Covington, Virginia,

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phanage noted, "More than a million cases of significant child abuse and neglect are substantiated every year. Five children in the country die each day from abuse and neglect. Upwards of 22,000 babies are abandoned annually in the hospitals in which they were born. The incidence of child abuse and neglect of all forms more than doubled between 1980 and 1993."

He went on, "Adoptions are an option, but only 6 percent of the babies abandoned each year in hospital nurseries are adopted. The foster care system is still an option, but increasingly, more difficult children coupled with poorly prepared foster parents generate a state of crisis. Foster care was intended to be temporary care; however, one out of every ten children—over 60,000 of all current foster-care children—can expect foster care to be, in effect, permanent care, given that they will spend more than seven years in the system."

We are perplexed and unsure how to proceed, and I suggest that we all have been feckless at best and immoral and criminal at worst when exercising our collective responsibility for youth. "No one is certain what solutions, if any, will work," Elizabeth Gleick observed of our unfocused inaction in a *Time* magazine article headlined "Who Speaks for the Kids?"

What About Orphanages?

We seem to have a love affair with the journey of orphans, and portray them as heroic survivors of harsh conditions. Our literature is full of characters like Oliver Twist and Little Orphan Annie, who escaped from orphanages with draconian rules to find kinder benefactors. The latest orphan to find fame is Harry Potter, although his mistreatment occurred while living with his relatives, or what is called "kinship care" in the vernacular of child welfare. Historical views are reflected in these fictional dramas, and we must be circumspect about embracing anecdotal evidence as empirical reality as we plot our policy directions. McKenzie has observed that, while some orphanages may not have provided good experiences for children, many studies of orphanages are too flawed to be useful in forming opinions about residential care for children.

Orphanages have a long, rich, and purposeful history in America. Some of the history is proud; some is an abomination and best left to lessons learned. Children have been abused and even died in orphanages. But before we rush to judgment, remember that children have also been abused and even died at the hands of their parents, in foster homes, and in all kinds of settings. Some families are like Bill Cosby's Huxtable family, while others are, like the Addams Family, a bit outside of the mainstream. Some orphanages have met children's developmental needs and some have thwarted their needs, as have some families.

The first orphan asylum in the United States was established in 1729 by Ursuline nuns to care for children orphaned in massacres by Native Americans at Natchez, Mississippi. They grew rapidly thereafter, mostly in response to war and epidemics. Homes were established for orphans of sailors and soldiers following the Civil War. Even more orphans resulted from epidemics and the loss of parents to deadly diseases. Today's kids are more troubled, though, than kids of previous generations who were more likely orphaned by death than by abandonment, drug addiction, abuse, or neglect which bedevil modern virtual orphans. Arlin Ness, longtime president of Starr Commonwealth, a residential treatment facility headquartered in Michigan, notes that today's kids are more exposed to violence, more wary of adults, and more devastated, hardened, and cynical by parental rejection and broken family bonds.

Not an Issue of Politics

First, we should note that the best place to raise a child is in a healthy, natural home with natural parents. Also, we must understand that some displaced children should never be forced to return to their natural homes, no matter how conventional and appealing that seems. It is not that we don't want children to live at home; it's just that some have been so damaged by their natural families that reconciliation is impossible. Just as we allow irreconcilable differences as a reason for divorce, we must allow children who have been abused and neglected by their parents to leave. We must not deny them safety, opportunity, happiness, and love because of a Norman Rockwell worldview that, for some children, is simply not possible.

While a loving family is the best place to raise a child, some children don't come from loving families. They come from abusive and neglectful families. Perhaps we must begin to embrace long-term care as viable options for many of our troubled children, in spite of our disposition in favor of the child's natural family.

Einstein noted that two perceivers standing in separate locations are likely to experience the same event as different. Management and personal development consultant Stephen Covey concurs that we are each limited by a private lens on the world and perceive and act from that worldview. For the sake of children, we must transcend our worldview. We should as a nation address family stability, child abuse and

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neglect, and welfare reform, and consider that some modern form of private orphanage care can be a viable and compassionate partial solution.

Moreover, the welfare of children is not an issue of ideology or of politics. Setting aside our partisan views will only enhance opportunities for success. Then we should agree on a national standard for the well-being and healthy development of children. I have long proposed the principles of Connectedness—positive strong relationships; Continuity—spirituality and permanency; Dignity—safe surroundings and respect; and Opportunity—the chance to explore and develop personal skills and interests. I call this CCDO for short. CCDO seeks to provide for children a set of principles and practices that can be provided in any setting if imparted intentionally.

In closing, I recall the death of Kayla Rolland, a six-year-old first grader shot by a first-grade classmate. Through my profound dismay, I remember suggesting to a friend that the little boy who shot Kayla might have been better off in long-term residential education instead of living unstructured and unsupervised with a teenage uncle, while my friend argued for the sanctity of the little boy's family. My reply: What about the sanctity of Kayla's family? More than at-risk kids, we have at-risk communities where all of our kids live. They deserve better, and so do we. No longer should we expect children to navigate without a map, steer without a rudder, and seek without a friend. ◆

John Seita, Ed.D., is president of the Evaluation and Advocacy Group in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His most recent book is God Is in the Kitchen and Other Everyday Miracles.

where he went to live when he was eleven, as "my home."

A frightened boy from a troubled family, Costigan was accepted by Boys' Home in 1987. While there, he enjoyed the structured atmosphere and loved playing basketball. "The system's rewards for good behavior encouraged me to get good grades," Costigan recalled. "I strove for high citizenship so I could take trips and have a larger allowance."

Donnie Wheatley, executive director of Boys' Home, is also an alumnus of the home. Wheatley said that residential facilities try to teach kids how to succeed. At Boys' Home, kids attend the local public schools but have special tutoring and counseling available. Boys are prepared to live on their own, being taught how to perform such essential tasks as making a budget, getting an apartment, or buying a car.

Although Boys' Home hasn't had the funds to conduct a formal study of the alumni, Wheatley feels that the home has changed the lives of many children.

He told of a boy who, utterly rejected by a newly merged family, ended up in a mental health institution. When Boys' Home accepted him, he was withdrawn and afraid of people.

"It took years to get to the point where you could touch him and he wouldn't cringe," Wheatley recalled. "But Boys' Home worked for him because he became part of a group and found his niche. He was a good athlete, and he used his strengths to overcome his weaknesses."

Founded by the Rev. George Floyd Rogers in 1906, Boys' Home is supported by two dioceses of the Episcopal Church. Boys are required to attend Rogers' old church in Covington the first Sunday of each month, and there is weekly chapel. "The services are oriented toward ethical and moral problems rather than trying to make Episcopalians out of them," said Wheatley.

About 95 percent of Boys' Home funding comes from private sources, and the other five percent includes public sources. Wheatley said the home would like to eliminate public sources altogether. The reason: An institution that receives public money may be required to take a child who might not belong in that particular setting.

"We don't want to take a child we aren't going to be able to help, so we are trying to position ourselves so that we don't have to take the tax dollar," said Wheatley.

Why is there so much opposition to bringing back orphanages?

"You have a lot of political capital invested in the system as it exists," said Wheatley, "and, from that standpoint, it's an uphill battle.

"There needs to be a greater emphasis on doing what is right for children," he added. *~C.H.*

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Oink! Oink!

Evan Gahr feasts on feminist pork. Isn't it high time the federal government stopped playing Lady Bountiful to these gals?

If perchance the Bush administration is looking for a specific pork barrel program to fry, we'd like to suggest some fat for the fire: the highly dubious projects that are funded every year under the rubric of the Women's Educational Equity Act. A sop to feminists, WEEA, which was passed twenty-seven years ago, has cost the taxpayer about $100 million.

Administered by the U. S. Department of Education, this remarkably resilient feminist boondoggle even has its own "resource center" in Newton, Mass. The Department of Education, through WEEA, funds the resource center, as well as financing projects of people who pledge to promote "education equity for girls and women." The annual budget: $3 million.

Grants are awarded to individuals, educational institutions, and community groups; the awards range from $75,000 to $150,000; the average is $125,000. So far WEEA appears to be safe: Funding for fiscal 2001 has been set at the usual $3 million, according to Education Department spokeswoman Melinda Malico.

Grantees have used WEEA money to do important things: One issued harsh criticism of the use of such nefarious terms as "housewife" and "ladies," while another blamed the 1999 Columbine High School massacre on "homophobia." One project led to a series of "checklists" to be used in "counteracting race and sex bias in educational material." One checklist item proscribed such beastly acts of stereotyping as "depicting dogs as masculine, cats as feminine."

Like a number of other government programs, WEEA allows an ideological clique that purports to speak "for women" to turn sacred cows into cash cows—indefinitely. Grants often beget …more grants: Researchers churn out reports that claim to "document" sexism in the public schools. This "discovery" clearly calls for yet another grant to study the "problem."

In the early 1990s, for example, Nan Stein, director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, and other like-minded academics documented—or overstated, if you believe critics—widespread sexual harassment in public schools. Obviously, further study was mandated. Thus, in 1995, Stein received another WEEA grant ($90,929) to investigate "sexual harassment and gender violence in schools."

Other researchers try to nip what they see as harassment in the bud. Merle Froschl, of the New York City-based Educational Equity Concepts, Inc., received $139,126 to explore "gender-based teasing and bullying in grades kindergarten through five." In order to reeducate the pint-sized predators who lurk in the *Romper Room* set, Froschl helped write a special curriculum guide titled "Quit It!" telling how

Drawing by Charles Jaffé

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teachers can integrate discussions of teasing and bullying into the curriculum.

Youngsters are asked what makes them feel welcome or unwelcome at school. And, boy, do some of these kids need reeducation: In the pilot study, the children were asked to discuss the different ways boys and girls "annoy each other." One woefully unindoctrinated child said, "Boys chase, because that's what boys do." Oops!

Suggested remedy: Play a non-competitive version of tag in which "nobody gets 'out.'" This all-inclusive game of tag is called "Circle of Friends," and it sounds like fun...for the class goody-goodies. "Quit It!" isn't the only example of taxpayer money being spent on making up games that kids probably aren't going to want to play.

The taxpayers also coughed up money for a guide on how to conduct an "Equity Scavenger Hunt": Students are directed to "find indicators of [their] school's compliance with the law and its commitment to equity." Specifically, they can try to find "a copy of *Ms.* magazine from the library," a copy of such "classic texts" as *The Feminine Mystique*; *The Female Eunuch*, and *The Second Sex*. For added fun find "a physics or calculus course that has an equal number of female and male students enrolled."

For those who prefer direct political action to mere child's play, WEEA offers "Raising the Grade," a curriculum guide, which encourages teachers to enlist—or perhaps conscript—students in the gender equity cause. The guide's "suggestions for student action" include having the kiddies "write letters to the principal and the school board to acknowledge that schools are doing a good job hiring women and people of color. Talk about how this has improved your educational experience at the institution, provided you with role models, etc." Students can also "lobby the school board to allocate funds for gender equity training for school personnel."

For youngsters who feel compelled —or propelled—to weigh in on the merits of Title IX, the 1972 anti-sexual discrimination law, there is a sample letter: "We are girls and boys who are looking forward to feeling safe and supported as we excel in the areas we love. We know we might not have had the opportunity to do that twenty-five years ago so we're celebrating Title IX in our classroom."

Unlike most other academic research—even the innumerable studies funded by other branches of the federal government—WEEA publications are not consigned to sit on shelves collecting dust. The Education Department invests considerable time and money to ensure that the research reaches as wide an audience as possible.

GRANTS, OF COURSE, are only half the story. The other half is the WEEA Resource Center in Newton, Mass. The center, which received a contract of $800,000 from the federal government last year and has an $850,000 contract for fiscal 2001, is working with public schools and states to promote "gender equity." The Center produces a newsletter, the *WEEA Digest* and online courses. Executive Director Sundra Flansburg, who has a masters degree in women's studies, was reluctant to discuss exactly how the center spends its funds. Groups with an "agenda" could misuse the information, she insisted.

Flansburg is herself a promoter of the idea that biased educational systems and other societal forces adversely affect the self-esteem of girls. This is the message of her article, "Building a Self: Teenaged Girls and Issues of Self-Esteem." Published in the *WEEA Digest*, it is basically a rehash of work by prominent feminists and fellow WEEA grant recipients, who contend that girls are short-changed.

But Flansburg sees hopeful signs: Lesbianism often provides a boost to self-esteem, according to Flansburg. She cites psychotherapist Beth Zemsky's discovery that "young women who are able to claim their sexuality and get support from a community of other lesbians will have a higher than average level of self-esteem."

The WEEA website features a list of fifty "women of achievement" that includes such names as Anita Hill, Margaret Sanger, who founded Planned Parenthood, Rachel Carson of *Silent Spring* fame, and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman justice of the United States Supreme Court, is not listed. When it is mentioned that the "women of achievement" seem to come from the same side of the political spectrum, Flansburg sputters, "I wouldn't say they are liberal. They have done important things." She explains that the list is compiled informally based on suggestions from "people in the [gender equity] field." "Would you like to recommend Sandra Day O'Connor?" Flansburg asks.

Most intriguing listee: Rigoberta Menchu, who is described as a "Writer, Noble Peace Prize winner, Guatemalan Indian activist, indigenous people activist." And novelist? The website neglects to mention that Menchu fabricated parts of her celebrated memoir, *I, Rigoberta Menchu.* Anthropologist David Stoll exposed the truth gap in his 1998 book on Menchu. Menchu later conceded that she had conflated stories of some Guatemalan victims of the civil war with her own.

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Why does the WEEA Resource Center omit this pertinent bit of information? Flansburg says that "some of what Menchu claimed didn't happen. But she didn't lie about it." Instead, contends Flansburg, Menchu told her story in the "Latin American oral tradition" which makes no claim to total veracity. Does that mean the fabrications are irrelevant? "I don't want to argue," says Flansburg. "You've got a different agenda."

The WEEA Resource Center appears to tailor its research to recent political fashions. Consider the November 2000 *WEEA Digest*, for example, in which various scholars blame pervasive "masculinity" and "homophobia" for some of the social pathologies that have engulfed public schools. SUNY professor Michael Kimmel argued in an article reprinted from the *Michigan Feminist Quarterly* that the "boy code," an outgrowth of masculinity, gives boys too much confidence.

Kimmel opines that the "boy code teaches them that they are supposed to be in power, and they begin to act as if they are." It's not "testosterone, but privilege" that turns boys into beasts. Another piece, by diversity advocates Craig Flood, who works for the Educational Development Center, and Susan Shaffer, of the Mid-Atlantic Equity Center, warns that "homophobia" is harmful because the "disrespect and indifference towards others" it encourages can "become part of the school culture."

Flood and Shaffer argue that it was a "homophobic atmosphere" at Columbine High School that led students "to routinely harass 'homos' and 'rejects' such as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. Their response further serves as a tragic reminder that boys often see anger as the only legitimate emotion they can express."

In other words, the Columbine killers were not evil—they simply had the misfortune to stumble upon homophobes.

Flood and Shaffer add: "Those skeptical of the ability to challenge traditional masculinity on a larger scale should note that the Department of Education in Scotland has recently prohibited the use of the epithet 'sissy' and related homophobic terms in Scottish schools."

Although, to be fair, censorship is one thing WEEA recipients have generally avoided, another WEEA grantee, the New York City-based Council on Interracial Books for Children, did publish a list of books it deemed inappropriate for libraries because of their "anti-human values," which included "handicapism, ageism, militarism and classism." (The council has criticized as racist Hugh Lofting's once immensely popular but now almost forgotten *Dr. Dolittle* series, and, as would be expected, *Huckleberry Finn*.)

Nobody typifies the WEEA grantee better than the late American University professor Myra Sadker. Sadker published *Sexism in Schools and Society* in 1973. This book described many of the "problems" WEEA was later created to fix. No wonder that Sadker (often working with her husband, David, also an American University professor) became arguably the most influential and longstanding of WEEA's grantees. It was the Sadkers who popularized the notion that schools and teachers discriminate against girls.

In 1977-1978, WEEA funded a Sadker project, titled "Content Analysis of Sex Bias in Teacher Education Textbooks," for which the Sadkers analyzed twenty-four of the most commonly used teacher education textbooks. The grant was $50,000. David Sadker says he and his wife worked year round on the project, and that the WEEA money only covered their summer salaries. Overhead and salaries for researchers quickly gobbled up the rest, he says.

Another Sadker oeuvre financed by WEEA was a pamphlet titled, "Beyond Pictures and Pronouns: Sexism in Teacher Education" that concluded that textbooks almost entirely ignore "gender equity" issues. To correct this, WEEA funded the "Nonsexist Teacher Education Project" from 1978 through 1980. Under this rubric, the Sadkers produced "nonsexist" textbook supplements for teachers.

During the early years of the Reagan administration, when WEEA's budget was slashed 40 percent (it had been $6 million), Myra Sadker was briefly forced to find other federal funds to underwrite her research. But by 1985 Sadker was again receiving WEEA funding. At this time, the Sadkers co-directed a WEEA-funded project to "train principals as instructional leaders in attaining equity and effectiveness in their schools." The Sadkers co-directed a WEEA project on "equity and education reform." Their advanced assertions of the 1970s and '80s became the conventional wisdom of the '90s—thanks to taxpayer funding.

David Sadker says WEEA helped put equity education on the front burner and that this ultimately benefits schoolchildren of both genders. "It was useful in alerting people to the inequities," such as the under-representation of women in textbooks and the dearth of female school superintendents, he said. "The amount of money given to gender equity is infinitesimal. [WEEA] has been a lighting rod politically. We're just getting out basic information. Some people find it threatening." ◆

Evan Gahr is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

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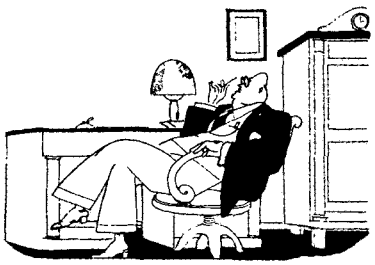
KARLYN BOWMAN'S

Poll-Pourri



The Boss Man

ALMOST A HALF CENTURY AGO, in 1953, two-thirds of women surveyed by Gallup said that, if they were taking a new job, they'd prefer a male boss to a female one. Until now, every time Gallup has asked that question, women have stated a preference for male bosses. In the most recent poll it's even—half the women surveyed said they would prefer to work for a man. Interestingly, more women than men said they'd rather work for a man.

Do we know something guys don't know?

We Are What We Wear

FORGET THE above-the-elbow kid gloves: We've become a nation that dresses down. According to Roper Starch Worldwide, 82 percent of women have a pair of jeans in their wardrobe, and 61 percent wear them regularly. About the same number have a daytime dress (85 percent), but only 36 wear one regularly. Eighty-four percent of women have running shoes and a solid majority (55 percent) wear them regularly. Far fewer, 61 percent, have a pair of high heels, but only 16 percent wear them regularly. Forty-five percent of women have a floor length dress or skirt for evening wear, but only 5 percent say they wear it regularly. And what do women think they look best in? A blouse or shirt, followed by a daytime dress, and blue jeans.

When it comes to going casual, men have followed suit. T-shirts are the most common article of clothing in men's wardrobes (93 percent have them), followed closely by blue jeans (90 percent). Three-quarters have a button-down shirt, two-thirds a sport coat or blazer. Slightly more than half (56 percent) own a business suit, but only 12 percent wear it regularly. Only 16 percent own a tux. What do men say they look best in? Four in ten, the top response, say jeans.

Unisex Fashion

OUR RESPONSE to unisex fashion splits along party lines. A recent Peter Hart Research Associates poll found that Republicans are less happy with the trend than Democrats—15 to 29 percent respectively. Only 16 percent of those who identify themselves as conservatives approve of unisex, while 34 percent of those who call themselves liberals are fond of the look. Women are slightly more positive about the development than men—27 percent of them compared to 20 percent of men regard this as a change for the better. Overall, 23 percent find the trend over the past 10-15 years toward unisex fashion was a step in the right direction, 34 percent a step in the wrong direction, and 38 percent a change that would make no difference.

What Will It Be This Time Next Year?

EVEN BEFORE the *New York Times* urged the White House usher to count the spoons, Hillary Clinton's popularity lagged behind that of other first ladies at the time of their departure from the White House. Forty-seven percent in a mid-January CBS News poll had a favorable opinion (and 28 percent an unfavorable one) of Hillary Clinton as she left the White House. By comparison, 71 percent had a favorable opinion of Barbara Bush (6 percent unfavorable) and 56 percent had a favorable one of Nancy Reagan (18 percent unfavorable) when they departed. ◆

Karlyn Bowman is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

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Ring Around a Rosie

Lisa Schiffren goes to see Rosie O'Donnell as The Cat in the Hat. She realizes why Rosie does a huge disservice to her fans.

GROWING UP, I was an ardent theatergoer. The paucity of serious drama that isn't trendy nonsense has kept me away in recent years. But I have been waiting eagerly until my daughters are old enough to sit through a Broadway musical. So, I was happy to read, last fall, about the coming of *Seussical, the Musical*, based on the works of the inimitable children's author, Theodor Geisel, a.k.a. Dr. Seuss, which, I presumed, would be a perfect introduction to Broadway for my children.

I have spent the past five years reading reams of children's literature, good and bad, classic and new, indifferent and lovely—aloud. And it still seems to me that the Dr. Seuss, upon which I was raised in the 1960s, has a fabulous, lilting, and magical way with words that is rare to nonexistent in American children's literature. Even his work for the very youngest of children is playful and irreverent. These days my three-year-old frequently responds to questions about why she is smiling by repeating the line from *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish,* "From there to here, from here to there, funny things are everywhere."

The books inculcate a love of language along with various messages and morals that any conscientious parent would find acceptable—with the exception of those three or four written after 1968 (when Seuss was in his dotage), which are obnoxiously PC.

So I was disappointed when the reviews of *Seussical* started coming in, and it was clear that the play was a flop. I gave the matter no more thought until an editor called to ask if I would see the play and write about it. I could not imagine why, but then she pointed out that Rosie O'Donnell, the daytime talk show hostess—who for reasons that are not entirely clear has become American culture's icon of female virtue; of nonthreatening, asexual single-motherhood; paragon of wholesomeness, and protectress of children—was being brought in to salvage the play. Brought in as what, I wondered, a financial backer? A spokeswoman? As The Cat in the Hat, came the answer—the star.

Who would cast a bulky, earnest, sob sister as the ultimate nimble, wizard-like, hep cat? Millions of investor dollars were at stake in this show. To answer this question, and to find out what accounts for Rosie's popularity—a matter I had heretofore successfully ignored—I agreed to spend a rare evening out with other people's children, seeing *Seussical.*

For starters, there were precious few children in attendance. The audience included several young children accompanied by a traditional mother/father team. I spotted a professional mom out with her polite preteen daughter. The rest of the small number of children in attendance were there with only mothers, who wore the pastel sweatpants that are the uniform of the tourist.

Almost half the crowd was made up of overweight (often seriously so) women in pairs, trios, or quartets, most wearing clothing and makeup that identified them as pink-collar workers.

I wondered why so many people were willing to shell out for the expensive tickets. "It's a rich country," my husband the banker said. Yes, but why spend it on a failed musical? Finally it dawned on me: All of these people—the secretaries, the single moms, the higher than average number of visible lesbian couples—were here to see Rosie. They didn't care a hoot about the play.

It was clear, from her very first entrance, that Rosie knew this. Rosie played The Cat in the Hat as—what else?—a talk show hostess—or, more accurately, a parody of a talk show host-

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ess. The Cat, Seuss's emblematic character, is not an entirely likeable character. He embodies the scary prospect of what would happen if imagination reigned and there were no adult authority to establish order. Rosie jettisoned this persona. She doesn't have much of a voice on a good day. The night I attended she had a cold, and was hoarse. Her dancing is competent but lacks élan. She is capable of two kinds of inflection: One is Long Island tough-girl sarcasm—the trademark of all her previous performances, including in *Grease*, *A League of Their Own*, and the *Flintstones*. Her other inflection is a flat earnestness. She read the Seuss rhymes in a mechanical singsong, no better than the average exhausted parent intoning those lines at bedtime.

This was a surprise to me. All of the profiles I had read of O'Donnell, including an incisive one by Jay Nordlinger in the *National Review* (which discussed her emotional brand of liberalism and her excessive Hillary worship) went out of the way to acknowledge her many talents—as an actress, talk show hostess, and "personality."

Calling her talented—in the traditional sense that a Broadway actor is expected to be able to convey a character different from herself, to sing on key, and to dance well—is a stretch. What she does have a talent for is establishing rapport with her audience, narrowly defined.

In her first turn on stage, Rosie picked a three-hundred-pound-blonde woman in the front row, stuck a mike in her face, and asked what questions she might have for The Cat in the Hat. The woman was visibly disconcerted by the attention. Rosie then ribbed her, saying, "I paid $85 to have someone embarrass me like this?" Later, perched one yard from my seat in the first row, she apologized for her voice and told the audience that she had a cold. Not just Rosie, half the cast: "Everyone backstage is 'hocking up lugies,'" she said, in a stunning ad-lib. Had there been any magic in this theatrical experience, the gross image that the cast spends its time coughing up phlegm would have destroyed it. But who cares what I think; the audience loved it.

Rosie's performance garnered an extraordinary ovation. While leaving I noticed a horde of middle-aged women surrounding the stage door, waiting for her to emerge into her black Ford Explorer, to be chauffeured to her large mansion in Greenwich, Connecticut, where she lives with her burgeoning brood, and from whence she periodically lambastes her neighbors as greedy capitalists and Republicans.

Her essential vulgarity is the key to the Rosie persona. Anyone who doubts this should tune into her daily talk show, as, I, notwithstanding my conviction that daytime TV is for slatterns, did the morning after seeing *Seussical*. Rosie's first guest was, of all people, fellow ABC star Diane Sawyer. Sawyer—a consummate professional who knows how to express empathy while keeping a certain distance—was "visiting" to promote her story, broadcast that evening, about the doctor at the South Pole who was stricken with breast cancer and had to treat herself.

Diane wanted to talk about the South Pole doctor. Rosie wanted to talk about that cold, which was bad, but "the show must go on." She asked Diane if she had had many colds this winter, and if they had kept her from going on air. "No, not really," Diane said, obviously wanting to change the subject. "What do you do when you get a cold? I mean, do you go the holistic route or do you take standard remedies?" Rosie persisted. "I find that whining and feeling sorry for myself are very comforting," Diane replied. The audience did not laugh, and Rosie refused to let it drop: "No, really, is there anything special you take? The whole cast of my show has this cold, and everyone is always recommending different remedies. Some people are pro-citrus. Others say no citrus, only honey." Diane maintained a pleasant smile. But it was obvious that she didn't like being trapped into a conversation about stemming the flow of mucus.

What does the Rosie phenomenon tell us? Perhaps that there is a large swath of women in America who feel wounded and left behind and find in Rosie someone who, unlike celebrities of yesteryear, didn't take elocution or "better herself" but makes her very vulgarity a badge of honor. Perhaps they are single mothers who work harder than they thought they would have to. Perhaps they wish they had more money or were more beautiful. For whatever reason they have chosen Rosie, who has tons of money and access to glamour, as their mascot.

And what does Rosie give them in return? A disservice by not pushing to make *Seussical* a better play they might want to see. By taking the money and running, she does her fans a disservice by legitimizing vulgarity, and leading them down the primrose path of trendy causes that may be fine for her fellow celebs but not for women who, without Rosie leading the way, might want to improve their lives with the cultivation of interests beyond one's runny nose.

Meanwhile, keep the TV off. ◆

Lisa Schiffren is a writer living in New York.

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One last observation . . .

All Victims, All the Time

WHAT IF your cable company made a mistake and you could get only Lifetime Television? Thanks to the fortitude of Harry Stein, who listed the movies shown on Lifetime in a single week (Jan. 3-9, 1999), you know what you'll get. Pass the popcorn!

Abandoned and Deceived (1995) Lori Loughlin, Gordon Clapp. Woman with two young sons fights back when ex-spouse stops paying child support. (2 hrs.) Fri 9 P.M.

Because Mommy Works (1994) Anne Archer, John Heard. To retain custody of her child, LA nurse fights her ex-husband and his new wife. (2 hrs.) Sat 6 P.M.

Betrayed: A Story of Three Women (1995) Meredith Baxter, Swoosie Kurtz. Lawyer's wife learns he's romancing daughter of her best friend. (1 3/4 hrs.) Sun 6:30 P.M.

Change of Heart (1998) Jean Smart, John Terry. A woman is shocked by her unfaithful husband's choice of romantic partners. (1 3/4 hrs.) Sun 3 P.M.

Eye of the Stalker: A Moment of Truth (1995) Joanna Cassidy, Jere Burns. Wily legal consultant obsessed with judge's daughter. (1 3/4 hrs.) Sun 8:15 P.M.

Cries Unheard: The Donna Yanklich Story (1994) Jaclyn Smith, Brad Johnson. An imprisoned Colorado woman must tell her teenage son why she hired two men to kill his father. (2 hrs.) Thu 9 P.M.

A Cry for Help: The Tracey Thurman Story (1989) Nancy McKeon, Dale Mickiff. Fact-based drama of abused wife who later sues police for lack of protection. (2 hrs.) Wed 9 P.M.

A Woman Scorned: The Betty Broderick Story (1992) Meredith Baxter, Stephen Collins. San Diego woman accused of murder after spouse bolts for younger woman. (2 hrs.) Sat 2 P.M.

Her Final Fury: Betty Broderick, the Last Chapter (1992) Meredith Baxter, Judith Ivey. Socialite on trial for killing ex-spouse and his bride. (2 hrs.) Sat 4 P.M.

In the Company of Darkness (1983) Helen Hunt, Jeff Fahey. Undercover policewoman with colleague lover lures out serial killer. (2 hrs.) Mon 9 P.M.

The Silence of the Lambs (1991) Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins. Brilliant cannibalistic psychic helps trap serial killer. (2 1/2 hrs.) Sat 11 P.M.

Sin and Redemption (1994) Richard Grieco, Cynthia Gibb. Pregnant minister's daughter learns something shocking about the man she has married. (1 3/4 hrs.) Sun 4:45 P.M.

Trick of the Eye (1994) Ellen Burstyn, Meg Tilly. Artist unveils truth behind her mural. (2 hrs.) Mon 1 P.M.

When No One Would Listen (1992) Michelle Lee, James Farentino. Murderous marriage. Two viewpoints. (2 hrs.) Sat 9 P.M. ◆

This list first appeared in How I Accidentally Joined the Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy (and Found Inner Peace) *© 2000 by Harry Stein. Used by permission of Dell Publishing, a division of Random House, Inc.*

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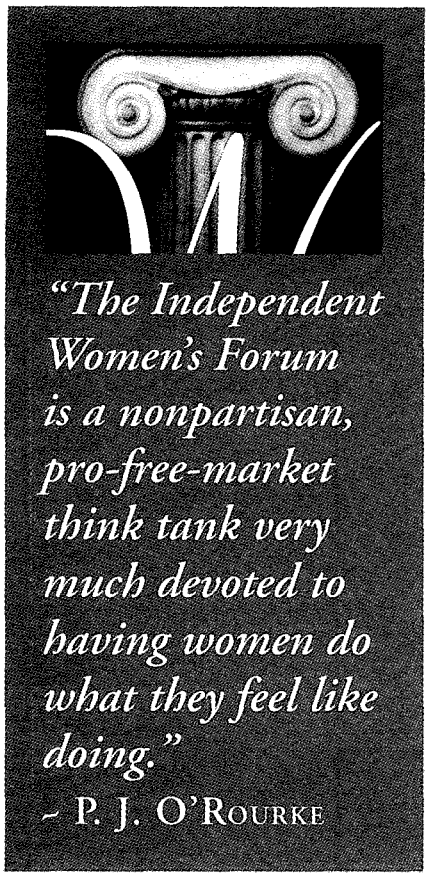
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